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ACTION WHA-00

INFO	LOG-00	MFA-00	NP-00	AID-00	CA-01	CIAE-00	DODE-00
	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	UTED-00	VC-00	H-01
	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01
	NSAE-00	OCS-03	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00
	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-00	SSO-00
	SS-00	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	ASDS-01	IIP-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00

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R 102010Z OCT 02
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8089
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
NSC WASHDC
USCINCSO MIAMI FL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003192

NSC FOR LLORENS
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, ELAB, PHUM, ASEC, VE, CASC
SUBJECT: OCTOBER 10 OPPOSITION MARCH SITREP NO. 2

SUMMARY

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1. (U) AT 1630 LOCAL TIME, THE OPPOSITION MARCH WAS ESTIMATED AT 1.1 MILLION, THE LARGEST MARCH YET. CTV PRESIDENT ORTEGA CALLED FOR A GENERAL STRIKE BEGINNING OCTOBER 21 IF CHAVEZ DOESN'T RESIGN OR CALL EARLY ELECTIONS. VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS OCCURRED OUTSIDE CARACAS EARLY OCTOBER 10. RSO SOURCES REPORT TWO PERSONS KILLED AND TWO WOUNDED. MEANWHILE, CHAVEZ AWARDED MEDALS AND SPOKE TODAY AT THE HISTORIC MILITARY MUSEUM IN CARACAS TO COMMEMORATE THE "DAY OF THE VENEZUELAN SOLDIER." HE SAID IN THE YEAR 2500, THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER THE LAST DECADE OF THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE FIRST OF THE 21ST CENTURY AS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN VENEZUELAN HISTORY. VADM ALVARO MARTIN FOSSA,

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THE THIRD HIGHEST RANKING MILITARY OFFICER, RESIGNED AND ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF IRREGULARITIES IN ITS "UNFOUNDED" INVESTIGATIONS OF OFFICERS FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES ON APRIL 11. THE MARCH DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE DISRUPTED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY SIGNIFICANTLY, WITH MOST SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY FUNCTIONING. END SUMMARY.

JUST PLAIN BIG

2. (U) AT 1630 LOCAL TIME, THE OPPOSITION MARCH, ESTIMATED AT 1.1 MILLION BY THE METROPOLITAN POLICE, CONTINUES, WITH ANTI-CHAVEZ SPEECHES HAVING COMMENCED NEAR O'LEARY PARK SHORTLY BEFORE 1500. MIRANDA GOVERNOR ENRIQUE MENDOZA, A KEY ORGANIZER, SAID THE MARCH "SHOULD EARN A PLACE IN THE GUINNESS BOOK OF RECORDS." CHAVEZ'S FORMER INTERIOR MINISTER
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LUIS MIQUILENA SAID THIS MARCH CLEARLY INDICATES THE PEOPLE'S DESIRE FOR MOVING UP ELECTIONS AND A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE POLITICAL CRISIS. MARCH ORGANIZERS ARE ALSO USING THIS OPPORTUNITY TO COLLECT SIGNATURES FOR A REFERENDUM TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION.

"RESIGN, OR..."

3. (U) CTV PRESIDENT CARLOS ORTEGA TOLD THE MULTITUDE FROM THE STAGE AT THE END OF THE MARCH THAT UNLESS CHAVEZ RESIGNS OR CALLS FOR ELECTIONS BY OCTOBER 16, THERE WILL BE A GENERAL STRIKE COMMENCING MONDAY, OCTOBER 21. OTHER SPEAKERS WERE SUITABLY FIERY. PRO-CHAVEZ POLITICIANS, WHILE DEFENDING PRESIDENT CHAVEZ, HAVE BEEN SAYING THE RIGHT THINGS ABOUT FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND NON-VIOLENCE IN THEIR PRESS INTERVIEWS.

LITTLE VIOLENCE REPORTED

4. (U) RUMORS OF VIOLENT CONFRONTATIONS RELATED TO THE MARCH BEGAN CIRCULATING EARLY OCTOBER 10, BUT THE MARCH ITSELF APPEARS PEACEFUL. THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPORTS OF DEATHS OR INJURIES IN CARACAS, BUT WE HAVE CONFIRMED THE FOLLOWING:

-- A PIPE BOMB EXPLODED IN THE ENGINEERING FACULTY OF THE CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF VENEZUELA (UCV) IN CARACAS ON THE

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MORNING OF OCTOBER 10. TWO MORE PIPE BOMBS WERE LOCATED AND
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DEACTIVATED PRIOR TO EXPLODING. PRO-CHAVEZ STUDENT AGITATORS
ARE BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE.

-- AS REPORTED EARLIER, AT DAWN ON OCTOBER 10, PRO-GOVERNMENT
INDIVIDUALS USED LARGE TRUCKS TO BLOCK TUNNELS ON THE
HIGHWAY BETWEEN VALENCIA AND MARACAY BEING USED BY PROTESTERS
TRAVELING TO THE CAPITAL TO PARTICIPATE IN THE MARCH. IN THE
DISTURBANCE THAT RESULTED, NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS SHOT TO
DEATH ONE OF THE MEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BLOCKAGE, AND
CIVILIANS WOUNDED TWO POLICEMEN. IN SAN JUAN DE LOS MOROS
(GUARICO STATE), LOCAL POLICE REPORTEDLY SHOT TO DEATH ONE
INDIVIDUAL INVOLVED IN ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO BLOCK THE HIGHWAY
TO CARACAS.

CHAVEZ SPEAKS

5. (U) MEANWHILE, CHAVEZ AWARDED MEDALS AND SPOKE TODAY AT
THE HISTORIC MILITARY MUSEUM IN CARACAS TO COMMEMORATE THE
"DAY OF THE VENEZUELAN SOLDIER." ACCOMPANIED BY DEFENSE
MINISTER PRIETO, FM CHADERTON, INSPECTOR GENERAL SIERRALTA
AND OTHER TOP MILITARY OFFICERS, CHAVEZ PRESIDED OVER THE
CEREMONY JUST AS THE OPPOSITION "TAKING OF CARACAS" MARCH GOT
UNDERWAY. IN HIS MESSAGE, CHAVEZ CHAMPIONED THE "SOLDIERS OF
THE PEOPLE" AND CALLED FOR A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ECONOMIC,

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	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/013W				

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POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF VENEZUELA. HOWEVER, HE
SAID THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE WANT "PEACE AND DEMOCRACY,
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PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY." HE ENDED BY SAYING THAT IN THE
YEAR 2500, THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER THE LAST
DECADE OF THE 20TH CENTURY AND THE FIRST OF THE 21ST CENTURY
AS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN VENEZUELAN HISTORY. HE MADE NO
REFERENCE TO TODAY'S MARCH.

MILITARY CHIEF OF STAFF RESIGNS

6. (U) VADM ALVARO MARTIN FOSSA, THE THIRD HIGHEST RANKING
MILITARY OFFICER, RESIGNED TODAY AND ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT
OF IRREGULARITIES IN ITS "UNFOUNDED" INVESTIGATIONS OF
OFFICERS FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES ON APRIL 11 AND OF ABANDONING
ITS MERIT-BASED PROMOTION SYSTEM. FOSSA COMPLAINED HE'S BEEN
CONSISTENTLY OUTVOTED BY OTHER TOP-RANKING OFFICERS IN HIS
EFFORTS TO DEFEND THE ARMED FORCE AS AN INSTITUTION. FOSSA
ALSO ALLUDED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES, WHICH
INCLUDE HAVING BOLIVARIAN CIRCLE MEMBERS MEET WITH
HIGH-RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS AT FORT TIUNA AND HAVING
GOVERNMENT AGENTS SPY ON GENERAL OFFICERS LIKE HIMSELF.

ECONOMIC SITUATION

7. (U) THE PROTEST MARCH DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE DISRUPTED
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY SIGNIFICANTLY, WITH MOST SECTORS OF THE
ECONOMY FUNCTIONING:

-- RETAIL COMMERCE: PRIOR TO THE MARCH WAS SOME PANIC
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BUYING. ON OCTOBER 10, SUPERMARKETS ARE OPEN, ONE PER DISTRICT. LOCAL BAKERIES ARE OPEN. DRUG STORES ARE OPEN PER NIGHT-TIME/WEEKEND SCHEDULES (I.E. ONLY DESIGNATED STORES ARE OPEN).

-- AVIATION: MAIQUETIA AIRPORT IS OPEN, AND FLIGHTS ARE ARRIVING. U.S. CARRIERS ARE OPERATING, BUT FLIGHTS OUT MAY BE DELAYED BECAUSE STAFF ARE HAVING DIFFICULTIES GETTING TO WORK. DOMESTIC FLIGHTS ARE BEING CANCELED DUE TO LACK OF PASSENGERS. WHILE THE ROAD FROM CARACAS IS OPEN, REPORTEDLY SOME OF THE ACCESS ROADS NEAR THE AIRPORT HAVE BEEN BLOCKED BY PRO-CHAVEZ DEMONSTRATORS.

-- PETROLEUM: BOTH PDVSA AND U.S. COMPANIES REPORT NORMAL OPERATIONS. PDVSA HAS A LIBERAL LEAVE POLICY.

-- BANKING: BANKS ARE OPEN, EXCEPT FOR THOSE ALONG THE MARCH ROUTE.

-- FINANCIAL MARKETS: STOCK EXCHANGE IS OPEN, UP SLIGHTLY AS OF 11:00 AM. THE BOLIVAR WAS TRADING AT 1482/DOL DURING THE DAY'S FIRST AUCTION. IT CLOSED AT 1495.25 ON OCTOBER. THE CENTRAL BANK MAY BE SUPPORTING THE BOLIVAR TODAY TO AVOID HEADLINE-BASED SELLING.
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